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This paper investigates the presence (or absence) of queer characters in recent, well-regarded young adult science fiction novels. Family structures and reproductive technology are used as a lens to exploring queer narratives and possible futures. Queer human teenagers were entirely absent from the books in the sample, though a few same-sex parents and one differently-gendered alien did appear. An action plan is presented to assist librarians in developing and evaluating a queer-friendly science fiction collection for their young adult patrons.

Headings:

Content analysis—Young adults' literature

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QUEER IDENTITIES AND FUTURISTIC FAMILIES IN YOUNG ADULT SCIENCE FICTION

by
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Introduction

In 1976, the Gay Task Force of the American Library Association's (ALA's) Social Responsbilities Round Table—an organization that is now the ALA's GLBT Round Table—published guidelines for evaluating children's and young adult literature with "gay themes." At that time, the number of relevant books was quite small. Over the past several decades, young adult literature has seen a proliferation of books with characters who identify as gay or lesbian, as well as a smaller number of books with characters who have other non-normative sexualities or gender identities. These books, as well as other media products (television shows, magazines, movies, etc.) with queer-positive themes, are part of a larger movement of "visibility politics" which aims to advance the societal perception and status of queer people by making queer identities more visible in mainstream culture. For young adults in particular, media products with visible, relatable queer characters can serve as a conduit through which real people can explore their own identity, their feelings about queer acquaintances and family members, and the possibilities for queer people in the past, the present, and the future.

Over the same decades, advances in reproductive technology and reproductive politics have presented new possibilities for people who hope to add children to their families without engaging in heterosexual (and fertile) intercourse followed by pregnancy and childbirth. Alternative insemination, surrogacy, adoption, fostering, and other nontraditional family-building strategies have brought a new degree of reproductive agency to a wide variety of people. As part of a greater cultural shift toward families

based on love and choice rather than economic necessity and biological inevitability, reproductive options have contributed to the "lesbian baby boom" and a general opening of the future to intentional queer families.

This combination—increasingly queer-friendly young adult literature and scientific advances that benefit nontraditional families—suggests many possibilities for the future. Will queer people continue to gain rights and social capital until they become equal and unremarkable? Will some sort of backlash occur, wiping out what progress has already been achieved? Will all children eventually be bred with the help of a laboratory, or will the children of technology and possibility become stigmatized and outcast? All of these questions, and many others, would be well explored through speculative fiction and science fiction. These overlapping genres tell stories of the future, often to make a point about a development in contemporary society.

Yet queer young adult literature is a field overwhelmingly dominated by contemporary (or "realistic") fiction, with a few fantasy novels and works of historical fiction thrown into the mix. In my own teenage years, I read a fair bit of young adult science fiction and developed a lot of critical perspectives on contemporary society from my reading. Young adult science fiction often critiques capitalism, genetic engineering, racism, the American political system, the education system, warfare, and even peace. But none of the novels I can remember engaged with queerness or with concepts of sexuality at all, though there was an occasional brush with gender.

In this paper, I set out to explore recent young adult science fiction with a reading focus on queerness, family structures, and any potential intersections thereof. As same-sex marriage and adoption by same-sex couples become divisive legal issues across the United States and in many other parts of the world, it seems natural that stories about the

future would take these sorts of families (and queer people in general) into consideration.

Literature Review

"Queer" Is Not A Bad Word

For every book or article that has been written about sexual orientation or gender identity, there is a different set of terminology used to refer to the people being discussed. While there are certainly terms that are inaccurate or rude, and while different terms have different social and political connotations, there is not one "right" way to refer to people who are not straight and cis[1]. In Appendix B, I have included a non-exhaustive list of terminology that is frequently employed to describe various sexual orientations and gender identities. For the purposes of this paper, I have chosen to use the term "queer" whenever it is appropriate.

"Queer" is, of course, not a term with an unblemished history. It is still frequently heard as an insult, and it carries a connotation of being *other than normal* in some way (W. G. Pearson, "View" 16-17). However, "queer" is also a unifying term, joining together many different sorts of people who identify in ways that disrupt any idea of a monolithic norm. "Queer" focuses on the public and political implications of identity rather than the intrusive specifics of one's genitalia or preferred sexual activities. To many scholars, "queer" serves as an expansive, inclusive term: "*Queer* is not a word that assumes everyone at the table is the same. . . . the word itself implying relativity, fluidity, defiance of categories" (Griffith & Eskridge 46).

When looking at speculative futures through science fiction, "queer" could

1 "Cis" is a catchall term for "cissexual" and "cisgendered," referring to people whose biologically and socially assigned sex and gender are congruent with their own concept of their sex and gender. For more information about these and other terms used to identify sexualities and gender identities, please see Appendix B.

ostensibly come to encompass anyone who identifies outside the culturally-enforced norm of sexual orientation and gender identity. Desire is not inherently queer because of who or what it includes. A man who desires the love of another man, a penis-bearing person who desires to be understood as a woman: these people are understood as queer specifically because their desires run against the norms and culture of the time and place in which they exist. It is because of this distinction that Mary L. Gray identifies queerness as something specifically active, "fram[ing] sexual and gender identities as queer labor carried out between people and places, to map the modern experiences, conditions, and expressions that produce a sense of 'authentic' identity" (Gray 26). Similarly, Susan Driver notes that, for the self-identified queer girls she is studying,

> the process of naming oneself *queer* is understood as a dynamic response and rearticulation of words and meanings in order to convey departures from heteronormative expectations. As such, *queer* is not a descriptor of fixed qualities but an instigator of a process of engaging with languages and inventing identifications (28).

In this paper, I am most interested in the ways in which room is made for a queer presence in the future. In the majority of books I read, social norms for gender and sexuality reinforced the same systems we know today, but searching for "queerness," rather than "homosexuality" or "transgendered people" allows for an exploration that includes all transgressions of the status quo toward a true and authentic sense of one's sex, gender, and sexual desire.

Using Popular Culture to Understand Narratives of Identity

The study of popular culture bases itself in the understanding that "popular representations provide some evidence for what preoccupies the American social

imaginary in specific history moments" (Kaplan 410). Widely disseminated media, such as books and television, serve as tools of collective socialization, teaching us how to understand and interpret our experiences with the world (Pozner 97-98).

Media-based instruction has a special place in the creation of queer identities. While young members of racial, ethnic, or religious minority groups are likely to know (or even be related to) others with the same identity markers, it is entirely possible for a young queer person to grow up completely isolated from anyone else they know to be queer. Thus media have the power to control initial exposures to queerness; media also serve to "circulate the social grammar, appearance, and sites of LGBT-ness" (Gray 12). Television shows like *Ellen* and *Will & Grace* are repeatedly credited with introducing millions of Americans to their first gay friends (Streitmatter 3, 124-125), and for queer youth, media products can serve as an introduction to and induction into the "whole different language" that surrounds queer identity (Driver 41). On the other hand, the mainstream media narrative of American culture seeks to promote normative narratives in which queer identities have no place (see, for example, Jennifer Pozner's recent analysis of reality television narratives in *Reality Bites Back*).

Literature for children and young adults has the power to "make significant and often undervalued contributions to how its child readers see the world and their place in it" (Mallan 3). If we wish to understand what young people absorb about queerness, it is imperative to look at what they read. Very little research has been done on sexuality in science fiction in general, let alone young adult science fiction in particular (Pearson, Hollinger, and Gordon 7), and so I have set out to investigate the ways in which queerness is fit into the speculative futures written for young adults.

The task of "reading queerly" requires the reader to move away from normative

assumptions of straightness and look instead at the ways in which gender and sexuality are performed and regulated (Hollinger 32). Both now and in the hypothetical future, gender identity and sexual orientation are not presumed to be static and immutable; rather, their representations are examined to determine what a culture (or, in the case of a fictional culture, its creator) perceives, enforces, values, or challenges. This angle falls in line with the larger tradition of cultural analysis, in which the scholar examines "the power relations among discourses . . . to deduce what produces certain discourses, what culture needs them for, and whose specific needs they serve" (Kaplan 410).

Queer theory is particularly relevant to science fiction, as Wendy Gay Pearson, Veronica Hollinger, and Joan Gordon explain:

> If we then take as the central task of queer theory the world of imagining a world in which all lives are livable, we understand queer theory as being both utopian and science fictional, in the sense of imagining a future that opens out, rather than forecloses, possibilities for becoming real, for mattering in the world. We begin to understand the importance of sf as a genre for exploring these very possibilities, as well as for interrogating the consequences of societies and futures in which conditions render the lives of many unlivable—sometimes in unbearably literal ways (5).

Investigating the assumptions underlying science fiction allows us to see what sorts of lives we are presenting as possible; though this is complicated by the presence of dystopias and other imperfect futures, it is still possible to tease out the assumptions and norms that are complicit in their creation.

Queer Identities and Young Adult Development

Queer-positive texts are crucial for young adults, who are in a developmental stage in which they are expected to become active romantic and sexual beings. (Certainly teenage sexuality is a controversial subject, but there is an underlying assumption that

teenagers, unlike young children, are people with sexual urges and understandings.) The cultural and legal landscape is shifting toward rights and acceptance for young people who explore queer identities. In the recently-published *The Right to Be Out*, educational law scholar and former classroom teacher Stuart Biegel outlines the state of case law concerning sexual identity and gender orientation in public schools. Queer and questioning students have had a number of previously-unguaranteed rights protected for them in recent years. As Biegel points out, however, the basic tasks of psychosocial development remain more difficult for queer youth as a class, who lack the guidelines provided for their heterosexual and cisgendered peers in the "road maps developed over many centuries and communicated to them by friends, family, books, the entertainment industry, and a myriad of other sources regarding how they can and should be acting and what the consequences of such actions might be" (123).

Access to any sort of queer-themed material has been frequently challenged, often with the assumption that controlling media consumption can keep a child or teenager from developing a non-normative identity (Gray 13). Recently, state legislatures in places such as Alabama and Oklahoma have sought to limit or completely restrict libraries' ability to collect and circulate queer-themed materials to children and young adults (Cart and Jenkins xvi). Even when young people are able to find queer materials, consuming them can be a risky endeavour as readers "worry that people might 'see me reading something queer,' they fear being humiliated by peers, and they suspect there are dangers of being 'found out' or 'kicked out of the house' by parents" (Driver 14; quotes are from interviews with teenage girls).

Those road maps that do exist for queer youth are still limited in number and tend to promote a relatively monolithic queerness. For example, in her study of queer young

people in rural Kentucky, Mary L. Gray points repeatedly to the notion of "metronormativity," the persistent idea that queerness is somehow antithetical to rurality and that queer youth *must* leave their homes and move to a city in order to be accepted (14-15). This single-minded narrative is important to consider when reading for queerness in young adult literature—the literature is certainly revealing about our culture's perspectives on queer identities, but is also reflects "what publishers believe, however correctly and incorrectly, will appeal to teen readers" (Cart and Jenkins 82).

Queer Themes in Young Adult Literature

Librarians have taken an active interest in the content of queer-themed literature for young adults for decades. In 1976, the Gay Task Force of the Social Responsibilities Round Table of the American Library Association (ALA)—an organization that has evolved into the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgendered Round Table—issued a set of guidelines entitled "What To Do Until Utopia Arrives." This document provides guidelines both for books and for librarian behavior. For instance, homosexuality should not be chalked up to "grotesque family situations or . . . pseudo-medical observations," but if such an explanation is present, "the librarian can point out that no such effort is ever deemed necessary to account for straight characters" (Gay Task Force, n.p.). Though "Utopia" is now 35 years old, its guidelines and suggestions are still heavily relevant to the field as they call for accurate, fair, and even casual depictions of queer people in literature for children and young adults. They will play heavily into my own suggestions for evaluating the queer-friendliness of science fiction.

For young adult (YA) literature as a whole, Michael Cart and Christine A. Jenkins

have compiled a bibliography of YA titles with LGBTQ themes, which is intended to be as exhaustive as possible for English-language literature through 2004. Cart and Jenkins note that young adult literature tells stories of outsiders and the misunderstood, creating a space in which there is a "need to see one's face reflected from the pages of a book and thus to find the corollary comfort that derives from the knowledge that one is not alone in a vast universe, that there are others 'like me'" (1). This search for kindred spirits falls in line with one queer young adult's observation that even as she resisted popular narratives about queerness, she "cannot deny the warm fuzzies I get when a queer character is portrayed in a good light, making me proud of my identity" (Driver 6).

To discuss and classify the queer-themed novels they have collected, Cart and Jenkins borrow from Rudine Sims Bishop's analyses of African-American characters. Bishop used the categories "social conscience," "melting pot," and "culturally conscious" to describe the different levels of engagement with race that were present in novels. In turn, Jenkins has adapted these categories to classify queer subject matter as "homosexual visibility" (coming-out stories, in which *being gay* is sufficient), "gay assimilation" (books in which characters "just happen to be gay" but are important to the narrative in other ways), and "queer consciousness/community" (stories which take place in a context of queer community and families of choice) (xix-xx). Though these terms are specific to themes of homosexuality, Cart and Jenkins discuss books with non-normative gender identities as well.

It is notable that over 35 years of books, Cart and Jenkins did not find a single title that, from the summaries and discussions provided, I would describe as belonging to the science-fiction genre. (I would, however, argue that Alison Goodman's *Singing the Dogstar Blues* should have been considered for inclusion.) The majority of titles were

what is generally labeled “realistic” or “contemporary” fiction, though other titles were historical fiction or fantasy.

Cart and Jenkins also found a sort of “homosexual gender segregation” among the titles—that is, books with gay boys or men typically did not include lesbian girls or women, and vice versa (40). Though some characters are of working-class or non-white backgrounds, most seem to fit Susan Driver’s observation that “differences and marginal types are segregated in these media formulas such that one is either a girl of color, a queer girl, a poor girl, or a disabled girl but never all at once” (9).

Though Cart and Jenkins’s bibliography ends in 2004, it demonstrates a clear growth in the sheer number of queer-themed titles published each decade for young-adult readers. The field of library science, too, is expanding its recognition of queer-themed books. In 2010, the ALA expanded the Stonewall Book Awards, which began in 1986 with the Gay Book Award, to include an award given specifically to a work of literature for children or young adults. (Previous years had seen other Stonewall awards go to books published for children and young adults, such as the young adult anthology *Am I Blue? Coming Out From the Silence*, which won the Stonewall Literature Award in 1995.)

Science Fiction: A Genre of Active Discourse

Science fiction, like all genres, has some fuzzy boundaries, but it is typically based in some sort of speculation that relies on scientifically defensible alterations to the world. For the purposes of this paper, I have selected only books that take place in a futuristic society, but science fiction can also encompass time travel novels, steampunk,

alternate histories, and completely foreign worlds. The editors of *Queer Universes* explain their understanding of the field as a discourse that

> is intimately concerned with the question of how people live in the world and what makes the world livable for them. Often science fiction answers these questions—or extends the sequence of interrogation—by postulating alternative (often future) societies and cultures, affected by alternative, perhaps foreseeable, alterations in science and technology (Pearson, Hollinger, and Gordon 6).

Tensions exist within the genre, partially because its status as "genre fiction" has led to stigmatization. Pearson, Hollinger, and Gordon specify that they are concerned with "literary science fiction," which is tacitly contrasted with cheap, tawdry "pulp" science fiction. Another site of conflict is found between "hard" and "soft" science fiction, a distinction that has to do with whether science or story is of primary importance. In his analysis of representations of gender in science fiction, Brian Attebery teases out a gendered undertone in the "true" fan's preference for hard science fiction. Science-first fiction includes the reader in "a technologically-minded elite [as] someone who can contemplate the real workings of the universe without fuzzy thinking or sentiment" (48)—with *sentiment*, of course, being a stereotypically feminine concern. All of these classifications are used to police the lines of "real" science fiction and exclude (or include) works or fans with whom one disagrees or takes issue.

In the twentieth century, the genre of science fiction has its roots in magazines that published both stories and letters; as Justine Larbalestier notes in her *Battle of the Sexes in Science Fiction*, early figures in SF were often involved at multiple levels, both producing stories and actively discussing stories others had written. While science fiction was already marginalized to some degree, those responsible for its production saw their jobs as important and prophetic. One popular magazine had the motto "Extravagant Fiction Today—Cold Fact Tomorrow" (Larbalestier 19), marking its perceived location

as a site of world-altering discourse. Furthermore, Larbalestier argues that science fiction engages "discourses of knowledge" more overtly than other genres, a position she traces to Kingsley Amis and Bernard DeVoto. Larbalestier herself is interested in narratives which pit women-as-group against men-as-group in some way, and she has found a recurrence of texts which

> routinely include large sections of exposition and philosophical explication. . . . [T]he battle-of-the-sexes stories' engagement with debates about the social constructions of women and men and the organization of relations between them is made possible by science fiction's generic rules (8).

She does not go so far into discussions of sexuality and gender *identity*, but there is no reason to believe that the same principle should not hold, that cultural norms of queerness in SF worlds should be understood to have been constructed intentionally and in dialogue with extant views. This active discourse can be seen throughout the twenty and twenty-first centuries as science fiction readers, writers, and publishers have engaged with ideas about gender and sex.

Science Fiction, Gender, and Sexuality

Those who study and write about science fiction tend to project a dual image of the genre's engagement with issues of gender, sex, and sexuality: in short, that the genre's set-up provides an excellent ground for dealing with these issues, which many authors have done, but that writers are also too frequently prone to set their otherworldly stories against a background of cultural paradigms identical to those they take for granted in their own societies (Attebery 167). In his book *Decoding Gender in Science Fiction*, Brian Attebery borrows Joanna Russ's pointed observation that "visions of future society well into the 1960s have space-suited men coming home to the wife and kids in an

orbiting suburbia" (5). Veronica Hollinger sets up the dichotomy between potential and practice clearly:

> All too often, heteronormativity is embedded in both theory and fiction as "natural" and "universal," a kind of barely glimpsed default gender setting which remains unquestioned and untheorized. Science fiction would seem to be ideally suited, as a narrative mode, to the construction of imaginative challenges to the smoothly oiled technologies of heteronormativity, especially when/as these almost invisible technologies are pressed into the service of a coercive regime of compulsory heterosexuality. However, in spite of science fiction's function as a literature of cognitive estrangement, and in spite of the work of both feminist writers and critics in their on-going efforts to re-think the problematics of gender--especially gender's impact on the lives of women--heterosexuality as an institutionalized nexus of human activity remains stubbornly resistant to defamiliarization. On the whole, science fiction is an overwhelmingly *straight* discourse, not least because of the covert yet almost completely totalizing ideological hold heterosexuality has on our culture's ability to imagine itself otherwise. Both science fiction as a narrative field and feminism as a political and theoretical field work themselves out, for the most part, within the terms of an almost completely naturalized heterosexual binary. (Hollinger 23-24)

Yet science fiction has been troubling conventional notions of gender for quite some time (Hollinger 23, Larbalestier 2), to the point that Attebery argues that gender-based inquiry is absolutely essential to the genre (10). In the 1960s and 1970s, a wave of feminist science fiction stories by authors such as Joanna Russ and Ursula K. LeGuin swept the genre, disrupting existing discourses about men and women. The discourse that surrounded these stories has made it "virtually impossible" to ignore the question of gender in science fiction writing; "if a writer wishes to portray unchanged sex roles in the future or in an alien society, that fact has to be explained somehow" (Attebery 6). Along with altering expectations of men and women, science fiction is a field in which the entire concept of gender and sex can be challenged in any number of imaginable ways (9).

Perspectives on sex and sexuality in science fiction, as in contemporary society,

have also changed over time. Attebery points to feminist utopias as a subfield in which the sex-as-reproduction model is frequently questioned, as "desire between utopian women serves as a sign of female self-affirmation and self-sufficiency and integrates the outsider or misfit into the utopian system" (125). Historically, however, sex between men in science fiction has had much more to do with power and dominance than with desire or homosexual attraction, though men marrying one another and "male motherhood" can be found at least as far back as 1963, when Marion Zimmer Bradley and John Jay Wells (a pseudonym for Juanita Coulson) published "Another Rib" (Attebery 125).

In science fiction, sexuality can be particularly powerful as human characters set out to become intellectually, emotionally, and even physically intimate with characters and societies that are foreign to them. Writing about stories by James Tiptree, Jr. (a pseudonym for Alice Bradley Sheldon and the namesake of an award for gender-troubling science fiction), Hollinger explains that "human sexual desire for the 'other' results only in pain, as our objects of desire becoming increasingly, and sometimes literally, alien to us. Sexuality is the failed attempt to know the irreducibly alien" (27). In these stories, man's reaction to new and strange creatures is to become acquainted with them sexually as well as intellectually, giving sexuality the function of gaining a seemingly unreachable understanding.

Sex without borders, so to speak, can also occur in science fiction without reaching toward alien characters. Science fiction writer Nicola Griffith has become known for writing stories with queer characters and perspectives; she refers to the idea of "labeling theory" when discussing the lack of heteronormativity in her work. "In my fiction," she writes, "I simply excise heterosexism and remove labelling based on sexual orientation. Being a dyke is unremarkable. Literally. In fictional terms, this changes the

world" (Griffith and Eskridge 45).

Young Adult Science Fiction

This open exploration of gender and sexuality does not necessarily extend into science fiction written for children and young adults. In fact, when Attebery tracks the rise of gender-based discourse in the genre, he points to "the formation of a separate market for juvenile SF" as one of the factors that led to this avenue of conversation (6). Though young adult fiction is able to take some sexual liberties that would be out of place in novels for younger children, "examining what sexuality and gender identity mean to young people" remains difficult in general because of "our cultural belief that talking about sex incites sexual behavior" (Gray 173). In addition, there is a prevalent idea that talking about sexuality necessarily means talking about sexual actions, while indicators of heterosexuality, such as celebrity crushes or remarks about the attractiveness of a member of the opposite sex, are considered to be typical and age-appropriate for preteen and teenage characters.

The family, however, remains an important site of discourse and symbolism in stories for young people. Writing about young adult "urban survival" novels, a genre that shares significant turf with science fiction, Marla Harris notes that recently-published urban survival stories

> do not hold out the possibility of restoration to one's family or to an ordinary life; instead there is a decisive rupture with the past. . . . Social changes in family life over the last thirty years, including an escalating divorce rate, may also account for what Marilyn Fain Apseloff sees as the increasing prevalence of abandonment as a theme in children's literature (74).

From a developmental standpoint, young adults are concerned with growing away from

their families of origin and planning for their futures as adults, which can be addressed by reading about characters who are forced to confront their own adulthood at unusually young ages. For example, many of the books assessed in this paper included main characters who were somehow separated from their parents and put in a situation where they had to make basic survival decisions on their own.

I will argue that a lack of visible queerness across the genre of young adult science fiction is a troublesome trend; at this point, though, I would like to acknowledge the considerable importance of metaphorically queer characters, those "outsiders" who populate the majority of young adult fiction (Cart and Jenkins 1). Science fiction writer Kelley Eskridge tells of the particular importance of these parallel journeys when she became frustrated with the limitations of lesbian science fiction:

> Eventually I hunkered down with Theodore Sturgeon, Robert Heinlein, and Marion Zimmer Bradley, all of whom wrote a different kind of coming-out story —more of coming-in stories at heart, about people coming into themselves. These stories did what the lesbian stories couldn't—offered me ways to explore new ideas about myself in the context of straight people as well as lesbian people. I needed that to chart my way (Griffith and Eskridge 42).

A Brief Introduction to the Socially Constructed Family

In the opening pages of *Decoding Gender in Science Fiction*, Attebery points to the aforementioned tendency of older science fiction stories to maintain the mythical wife-kids-suburbs middle-class white American family. In this era of writing, "gender was one of the elements most often transcribed unthinkingly into SF's hypothetical worlds" (5), and conventional family structures (if families were even shown to exist) tended to come with the conventions of gender. This mythology is not confined to science fiction. American social and political discourse clings steadfastly to the idea of a golden

era of American families, usually located in the 1950s, in which every family was white, every father had a full-time job earning a middle-class income, every mother stayed at home (and loved it), and every son and every daughter went cheerily off to school, studied hard, and never had sex with anyone at all. An extended discussion of this mythos is not germane to this paper, but feminist scholars have been hard at work deconstructing it for years, most notably in Stephanie Coontz's *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap*.

When looking at families and reproduction in literature, it is important to look at the assumptions we make about fictional families. Often, writers mimetically reproduce the norms of the society in which they live—members of dominant classes because it's all they know, and members of marginalized classes because they're told the dominant narrative is what sells. Eskridge describes a class that she and Griffiths took from renowned science fiction author Samuel R. Delany, who one day

> went off on us for having worldviews the size of grapes, for imagining everyone in our futures as white, middle-class, and polite (except for the dangerous characters, who were allowed to be gay or black as long as they died or were otherwise redeemed). [. . .] I remember one student in the workshop who wrote a lesbian character that looked and talked exactly like Nicola [Griffith], because she was the only out lesbian he had ever met. And he didn't understand why she might be offended (Griffith and Eskridge 42).

Mimicking "natural" families has also been a tradition in policies related to adoption and reproduction technology (such as artificial/assisted insemination (AI) and in vitro fertilization (IVF)). As each of these family-building strategies rose to prominence in the twentieth century, they were generally understood to be acceptable insomuch as they could allow "worthy" parents, who were always married and ideally middle- to upper-class and white, to have the family they would otherwise have if not for some kind of impediment to "natural" reproduction. In *Making Babies, Making Families*, Mary

Lyndon Shanley refers to these sorts of policies as aiming to create "'as if' families, that is, families which children to all appearances might have been born to the adoptive [or AI/IVF-using] parents" (12). This constant reproduction of "as if" families served only to reify and solidify developing cultural norms about what families should look like and who should be considered fit for parenting.

Over time, those norms have shifted. For instance, American law now requires that race not be a factor in adoption, with the exception of children who are identified as American Indian (Shanley 24-26). (It should be noted that this policy is also controversial in the Black community with regard to the adoption of Black children by non-Black parents, who may not be able to give Black children either a sense of racial identity nor the necessary skills to survive in a racist world.) The rise of feminism and the rise of middle-class, married women in the workplace has both afforded new options to women and provoked a backlash of imagery that promotes an ideal of (heterosexually) married women whose sexuality is limited and who dream only of becoming highly sentimentalized mothers (Kaplan 422).

Most notably for this paper, the same AI technology that allowed infertile, heterosexual married couples to keep their "failure" to reproduce a secret led to the "lesbian baby boom," which heightened lesbian media visibility in spite of "the massive erase of lesbian existence from public and private discourse" (Agigian 56). The rising availability of adoption, surrogacy, AI, and other resources has completely changed the playing field for queer people and non-partnered people (and queer, non-partnered people) who seek to have children. No longer can "family" be considered inextricably linked to heterosexual marriage, or even to heterosexual sex.

Depicting the Family

In recent decades, new medical technologies and evolving cultural norms have changed the ways in which it is possible to construct a family; they have also radically changed our assumptions about what families look like. In 1988, Catherine Townsend Horner published a bibliography of children's books which featured families with single parents. Horner reminds the reader that single-parent families have existed in literature for centuries, largely due to the presence of widows and of orphans being raised by single guardians (v). Important changes in both family structure and young adult literature came with "the sexual revolution of the 1960s and 1970s, the exponential leap in the divorce rate, and the concomitant emergence of the popular psychology movement" (vi), bringing us the subgenre of the problem novel. In the 1980s, single parents—particularly from divorced families—became a full-fledged theme in children's and young adult literature.

The sexual revolution brought particular change to the lives of women, who now had the legally-guaranteed ability to control pregnancy and childbirth through birth control and medical abortion. Meanwhile, adoption, assisted insemination, surrogate pregnancy, and in-vitro fertilization were on the rise. This unprecedented range of options allow all sorts of people and partnerships to consciously decide to become parents and to pursue parenthood, rather than having pregnancy, childbirth, and childcare be the "natural" consequences of sexual maturity for women (Shanley 99).

This shift has obvious ramifications for infertile people, same-sex partnerships, single people, and trans people who wish to become parents, but its effects are far-reaching enough to touch every corner of normative society. Sex and pregnancy have begun to be decoupled (in both directions: heterosexual sex can be prevented from possibly leading to pregnancy, and pregnancy is possible without any kind of sex), and

women do not necessarily need men (and, outside of a surrogate womb, men do not need women) for anything other than gamete donation. Women are able to compete, unfettered, with men in the workplace (Kaplan 411-412)—obviously an achievement for all women, but particularly making it more possible for families headed by women to have a chance at a decent standard of living. Like professional advancement, parenthood has become theoretically available to any interested person, challenging "both the notion of family as beginning with a heterosexual couple, and the notion that every child has two (and only two) parents to whom the child is biologically related" (Shanley 124; similar ideas are found in Agigian 8-9).

Family discourse in the United States still typically assumes that a child will be parented by some combination of single people and couples—for example, a single parent; two married or partnered people; two divorced parents, one of whom has remarried; and so forth. Within these confines, however, "diverse family forms—nonmarital births, divorce, same-sex marriage, non-marital cohabitation, interracial couples, blended families, and double-income couples—have proliferated" as part of something Amy Agigian refers to as "the shifting family terrain" in her work on lesbian AI (8-9).

Family is a subject that is extremely personal while simultaneously being very political, relying both on love and commitment between individuals and on public recognition of the rights and privileges bestowed upon those considered to be one another's kin. Our conceptions of who is and can be family depend partially on our upbringing, our religious and political beliefs, and our own desires; they are also shaped by the media. In a study of the depiction of Black families on television, Bishetta Merritt and Carolyn A. Stroman justify their work partially in terms of the perceived value of

media representations of family life. The authors note that

> some individuals believe that the media, particularly television, shape our attitudes about what kinds of family structures and interaction are acceptable and appropriate, and what kinds are serious or funny. The media also defines for us how spouses and parents and children are 'supposed' to relate to each other (498).

Similarly, in an article for *Florida Libraries*, Madeline Kovarik argues that children's books that reflect family diversity should be a collecting priority for libraries. Such images support the development of *all* children, not only those with nontraditional family situations, because they allow children to "identify with, understand, or become tolerant of" a wide variety of family structures (12). This argument dovetails nicely with the queer-theory ideal of "queering" one's perspective: by decentralizing the heteronormative family, we can challenge the idea that one kind of family structure is "normal" and the rest are unusual, existing only books we give to kids who are in special, challenging circumstances. Providing a wide variety of family images to children and young adults also suggests that those young people will be supported by the library and the community as they grow up and decide to form their own families in ways that suit their own orientations, identities, and wishes. Along with the teenage character of the problem novel who struggles constantly with the social burden of his burgeoning sexuality, we support the father he may become and the life he will live in decades ahead.

Research Question

How are queer people and relationships represented in respected young adult science fiction novels? Do evolving family structures and reproductive technology facilitate queer families?

Methodology

Selection of Sample

The guiding purpose of my selection process was to cull a sample of recently-published books that practicing librarians perceived to be well-written, quality works of science fiction. The American Library Association (ALA) published a list of Best Books for Young Adults (BBYA) annually from 1966 through 2010. In 2011, this list was re-created as Best Fiction for Young Adults. The lists are created by committees of practicing school and public librarians, and their recommendations often serve as collection guidance to librarians across the country.

I selected my sample from the BBYA lists for 2001 through 2010, as well as the 2011 Best Fiction for Young Adults list. For brevity's sake, I will refer to this group of lists as "the BBYA lists." Each list has been annotated with a brief descriptive summary of every title. Using these annotations, as well as summaries and genre classifications from NoveList Plus, I compiled a list of books that appeared to fit into the genre of science fiction. This could be indicated by a "science fiction" genre label on NoveList or by a summary that indicated a setting in the future, in space, in a dystopia, or in another science-fictive location. For example, 2006 BBYA list summarizes Ann Halam's *Siberia* by saying "Sloe, 13, treks through a cold dystopian wilderness full of thieves and outlaws in an attempt to find a safe haven for the DNA of genetically engineered lost animal species she's smuggling." The presence here of the word "dystopian" was sufficient to get *Siberia* put onto a list of books to investigate.

Once an initial list of books was created, I acquired as many of them as possible from my personal collection, the Chapel Hill (NC) Public Library, and the University of

North Carolina (Chapel Hill) library. I then assessed the books according to the following criteria:

1. **Availability**: The book had to be readily available from one of the three sources listed above.

2. **Speculative Science Fiction**: For the purposes of this paper, I was interested in depictions of future human (and human-adjacent) societies that could possibly have evolved from our own. This ruled out time-travel novels, such as Sherman Alexie's *Flight*, that take place in the present and the past. It also rules out novels that took place in the very near future, such as Meg Rosoff's *How I Live Now*, because the societies of these novels should be roughly equivalent to our own, with no real room for changing social mores. To qualify as "science fiction" rather than fantasy, all world-building should be attributable to scientifically-possible advancement rather than magic; similarly, any fantastic creatures (e.g. werewolves or zombies) should have origins that are scientific, such as genetic engineering, rather than magical or folkloric.

3. **Young Adult Fiction**: The BBYA lists include some books that are published for adult readers but have crossover appeal for young adults. This is a contentious area, as marketing can be entirely out of the hands of the author. To draw a line as carefully as possible, I relied on Cart and Jenkins's definition of young adult literature as "books that are published for readers age twelve to eighteen, have a young adult protagonist, are told from a young adult perspective, and feature coming-of-age or other issues and concerns of interest to YAs" (1). With these guidelines in mind, I ruled out books such as Karin Lowachee's *Burndive*, which was published by Aspect Science Fiction (an adult-market imprint) and features a

protagonist who has already been to university.

4. **Author Limitations**: To avoid having my results skewed by multiple works from the viewpoint of the same author, I limited my sample to one book by any given author, choosing the first book of a series whenever possible. Authors such as Ann Halam (a pseudonym for Gwyneth Jones), Scott Westerfeld, and Suzanne Collins had multiple books that would otherwise have been eligible for my sample. Any inclusion of the same writer under multiple pseudonyms is entirely unintentional.

Given these criteria, I brought together a sample of sixteen books shown in Table 1:

Title	**Author**	**BBYA**
The Last Book in the Universe	Rodman Philbrick	2001
Feed	M.T. Anderson	2003
The House of the Scorpion	Nancy Farmer	2003
Singing the Dogstar Blues	Alison Goodman	2004
Dragon and Thief	Timothy Zahn	2004
The Diary of Pelly D	L.J. Adlington	2006
Spacer and Rat	Margaret Bechard	2006
Siberia	Ann Halam	2006
Uglies	Scott Westerfeld	2006
Grease Monkey	Tim Eldred	2007
Unwind	Neal Shusterman	2008
The Hunger Games	Suzanne Collins	2009
The Knife of Never Letting Go	Patrick Ness	2009
The Adoration of Jenna Fox	Mary Pearson	2009
Matched	Ally Condie	2011
Fever Crumb	Philip Reeve	2011

Table 1. Study Sample

Content Analysis

Queer Presence

My initial content analysis is heavily based on the Gay Task Force's "What to do

until Utopia arrives" guidelines ("Utopia guidelines"). These guidelines identify six areas in which to "evaluate the treatment of gay themes in children's and YA literature." The guidelines pertain only to the depiction of gay and lesbian characters, and I have expanded them somewhat to apply to characters with other queer sexual orientations or gender identities.

1. **Central characters**: If the protagonist of a book is queer, are they portrayed similarly to their straight equivalents? Queer characters can exist in any situation; they can be detectives, farmers, or tuba players, and they can fill these roles similarly to non-queer characters, without either centering or othering their identities. If queerness or "coming out" is important to the plot, is it treated with respect? Does the author include a sense of the resources, media, and community that are available to real-world queer kids? If an "important person" in the protagnist's life, such as a parent, teacher, or best friend, is queer, does the protagonist ultimately accept their identity without major negative repercussions?
2. **Minor roles**: Does the story include queer characters in non-central roles? Are these characters included "naturally" in the background situation of the story?
3. **Illustrations**: Are there any pictures of same-sex couples or people with gender-variant expression?
4. **Degrees of explicitness**: Are queer romantic, emotional, and/or sexual relationships developed with the same degree of explicitness as non-queer relationships?
5. **Impact on readers**: Does the book represent queer people in a way that helps queer-identifying youth develop positive ideas about their futures? Would non-queer youth, or youth who do not know any or many queer-identifying people, get

an accurate and sympathetic impression of queer people from this book?

6. **Author's attitudes**: Does the author insert negative stereotypes about queer people into the story?

Given the nature of the books in my sample, some of these questions were more relevant than others. For example, only one of the sixteen books, *Grease Monkey*, had any illustrations at all. (*Grease Monkey* is a graphic novel, and the only graphic novel in the sample.) With these six categories of evaluation as guidelines, I developed sets of questions to assess the relative heteronormative and queer content of each book. Each question was answered based on direct source material from the books where applicable, as well as my overall impression of the characters and their situations.

CENTRAL CHARACTERS: Does this book have at least one central character who is depicted as heterosexual and cisgendered? Does this book have at least one central character with a queer sexual orientation? Does this book have at least one central character with a queer gender identity?

For the purposes of this question, "central characters" included protagonists, narrative characters, and other characters who featured heavily in the majority of the plot. Characters' sexual orientations were assessed based on their overall character development throughout the book, including any romantic/sexual subplots, their "crushes" or remarks about the physical attractiveness of other characters (when such remarks implied physical/sexual interest), their assumptions about their future romantic/sexual partners, and occasionally their viewing of pornography. Gender identity was similarly assessed based on the totality of the book, including any gender

transitioning or feelings of gender confusion. In books in which no characters were demonstrably established to be queer, all characters were assumed to be heterosexual and cisgendered even in lieu of explicit evidence, since those are the background assumptions of the time period in which these authors were writing.

For example, in *The Diary of Pelly D*, narrative character Toni V muses that "he'd never really had a chance to date a girl before and wondered how you went about it. . . . There had been one girl once, a quiet white-haired girl from City Four who'd told him about her pet sawri bird and let him stroke her hair" (60-61). Toni V never expresses any desire to date boys, nor does he ever find himself in a romantic or sexual situation with a male character. Thus he was coded as heterosexual.

Singing the Dogstar Blues features an alien character, Mavkel, whose species is described as having "two sexes in one" (7); Mavkel later chooses to identify as "he" after tiring of being called "it" by humans (93). Thus Mavkel was coded as a central character with a queer gender identity—though his identity is normative among his own species, it is still perceived as queer among the humans with whom he studies.

As I began to read and code books, I realized that, despite the occasional pair of same-sex parents, there were almost no queer young people. To explore this facet, I divided the central and minor characters into "youth" and "adult" categories, where "youth" includes the broad peer group of the young adult protagonist and "adult" includes everyone older, who typically have adult roles in society such as parenting, holding an occupation, or participating in government.

MINOR CHARACTERS: Does this book have at least one minor character who is depicted as heterosexual and cisgendered? Does this book have at least one

minor character with a queer sexual orientation? Does this book have at least one minor character with a queer gender identity?

Sexual orientation and gender identity were assessed similarly for this question as for the question above. "Minor characters" include all characters who are not central characters; because the protagonists of many of these books live apart from their families, this category often includes parents and other relatives. A character is considered "minor" if they are not central—that is, if they are not present for the majority of the plot.

ROMANTIC/SEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS: To what degree do non-queer characters engage in crushes, dating, sex, and marriage? To what degree do queer characters engage in crushes, dating, sex, and marriage?

This criterion relates primarily to the "degrees of explicitness" guideline; none of the books in my sample featured particularly explicit sex, but this guideline pertains to "portrayals of affection and falling in love" in general. For the purposes of coding, "crushes" include any remarks about another character that indicate potential romantic or sexual interest. In *The Last Book in the Universe*, for instance, Spaz narrates, "I shut up and listen to Lanaya because I love to hear her voice, even when she's telling me I'm stupid. Also, she's so beautiful it hurts to look at her, but the hurt feels good, which doesn't make any sense but I swear it's true" (103). Descriptions of crush-type situations frequently contained this sort of confusion and hurts-so-good sentiment.

Not all detailed character descriptions are classed as "crushes." Contrast the ways in which Titus describes Link (his best friend) and Violet (his love interest) in M. T. Anderson's *Feed*:

On Link: "Link is tall and butt-ugly and really rich, that kind of old rich that's

like radiation, so that it's always going *deet deet deet deet* in invisible waves and people are suddenly like 'Unit! Hey! Unit!' and they want to be guys with him" (8-9).

On Violet: "On the one hand, I thought she was the most amazing person I had ever seen in my life, even if she was weird as shit. On the other hand, I was pretty disappointed she was skeezing this sexy talk with Link Arwaker, who women for some reason always go for [. . .] And then she looked at me. Just at me, and I knew she was wondering what I thought about the guys and seductiveness and skeeze and all" (19).

OTHER RELATIONSHIPS: Does the story include friendship and other non-romantic relationships between non-queer characters? Between queer characters? Between a non-queer character and a queer character?

Neither queer nor non-queer people are defined entirely by their romantic and sexual relationships; interpersonal relationships of all kinds are valuable and beneficial. For queer characters in particular, this criterion is one way of measuring the degree to which they are a rounded character—do they have traits and relationships other than "queer"? To be as inclusive as possible, this question includes familial relationships as long as both parties are invested somehow in the relationship; being the orphaned child of a queer woman who died in childbirth would not count, but having a queer sibling or parent with whom one is in regular contact would count.

WORLDBUILDING: Does this story create a place for queer people in the future? Does this story acknowledge queer people in the past?

This criterion is largely a combination of the questions above, but it asks a much simpler question: is there a place for us? If not, does the author explain what happened to

the diversity we know now? This criterion relates most closely to the "impact on readers" section of the Utopia guidelines, which asks in part whether a book shows young queer readers a path to the future. Because queer characters exist in the context of a greater society and plot, it is hard to boil down their futures into "positive" or "negative," but I have collected relevant sections of text to discuss the portrayal of future possibilities.

Family-Building Possibilities

To investigate the social and technological advances (or regressions) in family-building strategies, I tracked the ways in which children are brought into families in each book. The following broad categories were used:

- **"Traditional"/unspecified**: Heterosexual intercourse leads to uterine pregnancy and childbirth. This category was tallied when a book did not specify the details of reproduction, as it is still the societal and cultural norm for the authors.
- **Babies come from laboratories OR IVF**: Some kind of scientific activity is involved in procreation, for everyone or for particular families. In-vitro fertilization is specifically mentioned in *The Adoration of Jenna Fox*, for example, while Pelly D simply mentions having been "born" in a lab.
- **Cloning**: A particular form of scientific intervention, cloning involves creating a new individual who is an exact genetic copy of an existing person. Cloning is a major part of *House of the Scorpion*, but it is mentioned only casually in *Feed*, when it is revealed that Link is Abraham Lincoln's clone.
- **Individual genetic modification is possible**: Genetic modification can occur in either laboratory or uterine pregnancy in some of these futures. Typically, a character will specifically mention having received (or not received) particular

modifications, whether for physical appearance or personality traits.

- **Adoption or guardianship**: A parent or parents seek and are granted formal or informal custody of a child who was originally born to another family. This can include friends or relatives who taken in orphans, such as Ben and Cillian's raising of Todd in *The Knife of Never Letting Go*.
- **Foundlings**: Foundlings are tracked separately from adoptions because the agency in this situation is reversed: a person or people who are currently responsible for a child leave that child to be found by someone else, thus, to varying degrees, forcing custody on an unsuspecting person. “Storking,” a common practice in *Unwind*, is an example of a foundling situation: a parent can relinquish responsibility for an infant by leaving that infant on someone else's doorstep, legally obligating that new family to care for the child. (The only exception occurs if the stork-er is caught in the act, in which case they are required to keep the child.)

Findings

Charts with the book-by-book breakdown of this data can be found in Appendix A.

Central and Minor Characters

Of the sixteen books in my sample, only three (18.75%) included queer characters at any level of development. One book had both major and minor characters who were classified as queer, and two additional books had families headed by two fathers:

- *The Knife of Never Letting Go*: The narrative character, Todd Hewitt, is an orphan who has been taken into the care of Ben and Cillian. These two men had been friends with his parents since before all four of them traveled to New World, the planet on which this book takes place.
- *Singing the Dogstar Blues*: One of the main characters in Alison Goodman's novel is Mavkel, an alien from the planet Choria. Chorians "have two sexes in one, like slugs" (7). While there is no exact parallel to be drawn to a human identity, and while Mavkel's gender is not queer among Chorians, he struggles with being labeled "it" by humans and ultimately chooses to present as male while he is studying with humans (93-94). *Dogstar* has additional queer characters who play more minor roles: main character Joss's mother, Ingrid, is bisexual, and her former partner, Louise, appears later in the story to give Joss some guidance. Joss briefly speaks to Louise's new partner, also a woman, on the phone as well.
- *Unwind*: Lev, the religious and conservative main character of *Unwind*, becomes acquainted with a teenager named Cyrus, or "CyFi," who has two dads. CyFi's dads are "mmarried"—the extra *m* makes all the difference, since marriage

between men was made illegal in Lev and CyFi's society (129). (CyFi is quick to explain that he himself is only interested in girls.) CyFi's dads appear briefly to retrieve him from a joyride of sorts, so I have classified them as minor characters. All three of these books, as well as all of the other books in my sample, included numerous characters who were either implicitly or explicitly heterosexual or cisgendered. Mavkel is both the only major character and the only young adult character who can be read as queer; all other queer characters are gay, lesbian, and bisexual parents.

Relationships

The most frequently-occurring relationship was non-queer marriages or long-term partnerships, which were found in every book except *Singing the Dogstar Blues* (fifteen books, or 93.75%). (Even *Dogstar* has heavy implications of background heterosexual marriages, though none of its actual characters are depicted as being part of one.) Typically, these were relationships between parents or other adults, though *The Adoration of Jenna Fox* includes an epilogue describing Jenna's seventy-year-long marriage to Ethan, with whom she had become involved during the main trajectory of the story (M. Pearson 264). Some marriages have ended by the time of the book, such as Kit Solent's marriage in *Fever Crumb*, but though Kit's wife, Katie, is dead, he reminisces about their relationship and describes it in sufficient detail as to provide a model of how such partnerships are forged in *Fever Crumb*'s future world. Only three books feature marriages (or mmarriages, per *Unwind*'s terminology) or long-term partnerships between queer individuals—namely, the three instances of gay parenthood previously described.

In terms of actual depicted romantic/sexual interactions, non-queer relations completely dominate the picture. Twelve of the sixteen books (75%) include an

unambiguous straight crush, and ten books (62.5%) include at least one descriptive kiss with romantic intentions. I do not include Joss and Mavkel's birthday kiss in *Singing the Dogstar Blues* (Goodman 147-148), because it was done as a means of expressing Mavkel's growing understanding of human etiquette and does not result in any sort of romantic or sexual awakening. However, Matt's forced birthday kiss from María in *House of the Scorpion* was counted because Matt pushes María to kiss him specifically because he wishes she could be his girlfriend (Farmer 109).

Only *Feed* includes "on-screen" fumbles toward sex, which get derailed by concerns about Violet's mortality and end in a heated argument (Anderson 210-216). Titus's friends are also implied to be sexually active, and a number of books include future euphemisms for sexual intercourse, but the attempted-sex scene in *Feed* is the only thing that comes close to the original Utopia-guidelines concept of modeling the ways in which relationships form and develop.

No queer characters are shown nursing crushes, kissing, having sex, or otherwise demonstrating the physical/sexual aspect of their relationship. Mavkel has an intense desire to pair with Joss, but this pairing, which will be discussed further, is of a familial nature, not a sexual nature. All other queer characters are adults and parents, with their relationships defined almost entirely by the raising of children with someone of the same gender (or without anyone of the opposite gender).

Platonic and familial relationships exist between non-queer characters in all sixteen books, and between queer and non-queer characters in all three books in which queer characters exist at all. In particular, all three books with queer characters feature queer parents who share their lives with their non-queer children. However, with the exception of Mavkel's relationship with his doctor and mentor of sorts in *Singing the*

Dogstar Blues, every relationship between queer people is currently or has been romantic and/or sexual in nature. In *Unwind* and *The Knife of Never Letting Go*, the pairs of fathers are the only queer characters; they are not described as having any kind of extended network of queer friends or allies. Similarly, the lesbian and bisexual characters in *Dogstar* are only shown to be in relationships with their current partners; Louise and Ingrid haven't been in touch since they broke up, and Louise is now in a relationship with Barbara.

Worldbuilding

There are no surprises in the worldbuilding of the books in the sample; the three books with queer characters (18.75%) acknowledge the existence of queer people in their present, while books without queer characters make no mention of even theoretical queerness in their worlds.

Similarly, three books acknowledge the existence of queer people or queer issues in their historical past—but *Feed* replaces *The Knife of Never Letting Go* in this count. *Feed*'s one reference to gay people's place in history is brief and somewhat jarring. When Violet is dreaming about the future she'd like to have, she plans to tell her grandchildren about their family history, including their great-great-great-great-grandfather, who

> fled Germany just before the Second World War. He was a homosexual, and had to wear a pink triangle on his arm. He got to America and married a pretty Marxist candy striper to get citizenship, and eventually they decided to have kids. My grandkids will ask me what a candy striper is (184).

That Violet's grandkids won't ask her what "a homosexual" is suggests that homosexuality may still exist and be recognized in the world of *Feed*, but nothing in the rest of the book supports this mention. More notably, the only gay person discussed in *Feed* was persecuted for his homosexuality, then married a woman and had children,

which is the only reason he is remembered (because Violet is his direct descendent). Does this reflect the actual historical situation of some individuals? Almost certainly. But it certainly doesn't offer much hope for either the future place or the historical memory of queer people and queer activism.

Singing the Dogstar Blues similarly links historical queerness with tragedy as Joss stumbles upon a restoration of a section of the AIDS quilt. The squares she sees having loving and tender inscriptions on them, though we learn that most of the quilt was deliberately burned "just after the same-sex marriage law went through" (Goodman 130). In a reversal of *Feed*'s world, in which the only story left about queer people is a sad one, *Dogstar*'s world is one where almost all interest in the AIDS quilt has been lost (131-132) as queer people have come to receive legal and social equality.

The legal and social situation appears to have changed little for queer people—or at least for same-sex marriage—in the world of *Unwind*. When Lev learns that CyFi's dads are mmarried, he is immediately confused because it became illegal for men to marry in the fallout of the Heartland War, the red-state-against-blue-state American civil war that precedes the story by at least a generation (129). *Mmarriage*, with the extra *m*, is never fully explained, but it appears to be some kind of social and potentially legal "official" status for pairs of men.

Reproductive Options

In fourteen of the sixteen books in the sample (87.5%), "traditional" heterosexual intercourse and uterine pregnancy remained a viable reproductive option, or methods of reproduction were not explicitly described. The two exceptions were *Feed*, in which it is explicitly mentioned that background radiation has become too severe to allow

"freestyle" reproduction (179), and *The Diary of Pelly D*, whose main characters are a genetically engineered human hybrid with gills and the only mentions of reproduction involve children being brought home from a lab (141-142).

Adoption or guardianship was the next most frequently-documented method of bringing children into a family, appearing in six books (37.5%). Foundlings were specifically mentioned in three books (18.75%), two of which (*Unwind* and *The Last Book in the Universe*) also included adoption. Between adoption, guardianship, and the taking-in of foundlings, a total of seven books (43.75%) included situations in which a family included children who had already been born to someone not of that family.

Five books (31.25%) contained mention of either laboratory-led reproduction or in-vitro fertilization, situations which allow potential parents to have their "own" children at a time of their own deciding rather than waiting for another person to surrender a child for adoption or guardianship. Two books (12.5%) specifically mentioned cloning: in *Feed*, as mentioned above, all children have to be bred in a lab, and cloning is one of many options for creating the perfect child. In *House of the Scorpion*, however, most children appear to be conceived and born through traditional, sexual means; cloning is an entirely separate process, and clones are socially stigmatized and viewed as non-human because they are gestated in the wombs of cows (226).

Within all of these methods of reproduction, provisions for individual genetic modification are made in four books (25%), including genetic hybridization with several progenitors who possess certain desired traits (*Singing the Dogstar Blues*) and specific modifications to give a child a particular physical or mental advantage (*Spacer and Rat*).

Discussion

Queer Presence

Despite an overall penchant for technological progress and cultural roots in our own increasingly queer-friendly world, by and large, recent young adult science fiction novels are devoid of meaningful queer characters. Most notably, in the sixteen books in this sample, only one queer young adult character could be found: Mavkel, the two-gendered alien from *Singing the Dogstar Blues*. And even Mavkel's gender identity is in keeping with the expectations of Chorian society; he is unusual there only because he did not die when Kelmav, his pair, died.

It is also worth noting that CyFi's mmarried dads are mentioned on only a few pages of *Unwind*, and even when they appear, they are not developed as individual characters at all, but only as a pair of fathers who come to bring their son home. When we meet the fathers, they even act as a unit: "Cyrus's dads are there to fill the void. They help Cyrus up and hold him tight" (Shusterman 193). Meanwhile, Ben and Cillian in *The Knife of Never Letting Go* are never explicitly stated to be gay, to be in love, or to be married/partnered, though there are hints in the ways they are constructed as a parallel couple of Todd's parents. (For example: "Ma convinced Pa and Ben convinced Cillian [to move to New World] and when the ships landed and the settlement started, it was my ma and pa who raised sheep on the next farm over from Ben and Cillian growing wheat" (Ness 24).

This leaves Mavkel, Ingrid (Joss's mother), and Louise (Ingrid's former partner), all from *Singing the Dogstar Blues*, as the only characters whose queer identities are the location of any character development. And while some of the other books portray male

and female characters with nonstereotypical character traits (e.g. Peeta the cookie-decorator and Katniss the hunter in *The Hunger Games*), gender and sexuality fail to be the site of much discourse. There are, of course, some exceptions. *The Knife of Never Letting Go* engages deeply with the idea of "manhood" as Todd encounters women for the first time since his infancy, when a catastrophic event killed all the women in his town. (In fact, *Knife* co-won the 2008 James Tiptree, Jr., Award, which specifically recognizes critical discourse about gender in science fiction and fantasy.) Fever Crumb is the only girl/woman ever admitted to the Order of Engineers, "since it was well known that female minds were not capable of rational thought" (Reeve 8). Fever does, in fact, display a capacity for ration, but when she meets a male Engineer who left the Order to get married and have children, the hard break between rationality and emotion begins to seem less useful. Several books mention societal change that was designed to promote heterosexual attraction and reproductive sex: couples in *Matched* are paired to create the best possible offspring, for example, and the first pretty-making surgery in *Uglies* gives the New Pretty the appearance of health and hyper-fertility.

Family Structures

Reproductive technology seems to be a more crucial part of the future as imagined by early twenty-first century authors. Some degree of scientific intervention in reproduction is evident in eight (50%) of the sixteen books in the sample, including genetic modification, in-vitro fertilization, and cloning. The twentieth century also saw the rise of formal, extra-familial adoption; seven books (43.75%) include formal adoption, the taking-in of foundlings, and/or state-run foster care as possibilities. These categories overlap, but overall, twelve books (75%) take place in worlds in which it is

theoretically possible to obtain a child a way other than the traditional "heterosexual sex + gestation + live birth" formula. Notably, despite the historical precedent of the "lesbian baby boom" spurred by the rise of assisted insemination and discussed in the literature review, only one book includes the use of reproductive technology to create children for people living outside of heterosexual relationships: in *Singing the Dogstar Blues*, single mother Ingrid uses sperm from an anonymous donor, and Louise and her partner, Barb, have a son with a known sperm donor. Both pairs of fathers (in *The Knife of Never Letting Go* and *Unwind)* end up with sons for whom they hadn't planned—Ben and Cillian get Todd when his parents die, and CyFi's fathers were "storked," or had Cyrus left on their doorstep as a foundling. That is, though same-sex parents are present in three books, reproductive *agency* is only available to single and queer people in *one* book.

Attitudes toward reproductive technology differ significantly among books. Pelly D, for one, projects a very blasé attitude about the circumstances of her origin, casually mentioning that "I've known Moma Peg ever since Mum & Dad brought me home from the lab" (Adlington 141-142). In-vitro fertilization and unspecified "extra measures" (M. Pearson 10) seem to be common in the near-future world of *The Adoration of Jenna Fox*, and Jenna's mother brings up its general acceptance in an argument with Jenna's grandmother, Lily, a former doctor who believes that the measures taken to keep Jenna alive were unnatural and wrong. Jenna's mother counters that

> "You of all people should understand! If it weren't for in vitro [fertilization], I wouldn't be here. You always called me your miracle. Why can't I have one, too? Why do you get to decide when the miracles will end?
> "It's not natural."
> "Neither was I! You needed help. That's all I wanted—" (41)

(The conclusion of the book seems to suggest that there is indeed a line to draw between

natural and unnatural, but that Jenna is on the safe, human side of it.)

In *Feed*, the rise of assisted reproduction still seems to be controversial to critical thinkers like Violet's parents, who had "really wanted to have me freestyle. . . . Anyway, the ambient radiation was already too bad by then for freestyle. So they went test-tube" (Anderson 179). Later, as Violet prepares to die, she expresses a sense of bitterness at having been born alone, "brought into the world in a room with no one there but seven machines. We all are. My parents watched through the glass when I was taken out of the amniotic fluid" (213). Narrative character Titus's gripes with his conception are comparatively petty, but he's certainly not pleased to learn that his parents requested he have "the chin, dimples, and hairline of DelGlacey Murdoch," a never-quite-popular actor (95).

Though *Siberia* is one of the four books *not* to include any sort of nontraditional families (Sloe's seeming adoption by a band of travelers turns out to be a front for slave traders), its main plot is heavily concerned with assisted *animal* reproduction. Sloe's world is a bleak dystopian future in which many scientists, including her parents, have been killed or exiled because of the challenge their work presents to the state. When her mother disappears, Sloe becomes the guardian of a set of a set of seeds known as "Lindquists," which hold the reproductive potential for all the wild land mammals that have been otherwise wiped out. One by one, Sloe raises a full-sized animal from each family, and they help her survive as she traverses the wilderness. She also gains a sense of maternal power as the kits develop: "It was magical the way the kits relaxed at the sound of my voice. It made me feel so powerful, as if everything was going to be all right" (Halam 126). Upon meeting a former colleague of her mother's, Sloe learns that the Lindquists have imprinted upon her at a genetic level so that "the chemical bases

themselves, they think you are their mother. Or Life itself!" (201). Conceptually, the Lindquists are modeled after actual (plant) seed banks, which seek to preserve biodiversity for the future. Though the possibility of breeding humans is never broached, the whole idea of saving species in "seed" form, to be revived when the time is right, has some interesting implications for assisted and artificial reproduction.

Related Discourse

I want to stress here that plotlines that can be read as queer metaphors *do not* constitute an appropriate substitute for the presence of actual queer characters and stories. This is a reductive conclusion in both directions—arguing that the social stigma of Spaz's epilepsy in *The Last Book in the Universe* is equivalent to the social stigma against queer young people today minimizes the reality of both homophobia/transphobia and ableism (anti-disability prejudices and assumptions). However, science fiction is a genre that is actively involved in questioning dominant social narratives, and I believe it is important to look at the ways in which some of these novels question some of the larger social ideas that can contribute to the challenges faced by queer young people.

Star-Crossed Lovers: Who Can You Love?

Crushes and romances that cross social boundaries and "break all the rules" are relatively common in young adult literature, and in today's heteronormative society, queer love stories can certainly be understood as a subset of this plotline. In futuristic societies, particularly dystopias, new societal regulations can construct strict barriers defining who can love whom—and, even more important to social cohesion, who should

be permitted to marry and/or raise children. As previously discussed, the actual same-sex couples in the sample were given different degrees of legitimacy: in *Singing the Dogstar Blues*, the passage of same-sex marriage laws is specifically mentioned (Goodman 130), and both single women and women partnered with women are able to conceive and raise children. In *Unwind*, however, CyFi's fathers are able to get "mmarried" but not *married* (Shusterman 129), and they obtained Cyrus when he was left on their doorstep as part of the common child-surrendering practice known as "storking." Ben and Cillian in *The Knife of Never Letting Go* have the least certain status of these same-gender couples; there is no mention in-text of their legal relationship to one another either on Earth or on New World.

Among the books in the sample, the only extended critical discourse about social regulations to love, partnership, and parenthood occurs in opposite-gender relationships. For example, *Spacer and Rat* lacks a distinctive romantic subplot, but prejudices and well-policed social boundaries still crop up in casual conversation. When Jack, the main character, starts hanging out with and standing up for the Earthie "rat" Kit, his fellow space-station dwellers tease him, asking if he's "space-happy." When one boy asks if Jack and Kit are romantically involved, another replies, "'Oh, come on. . . . Even Jack wouldn't snug with an Earthie.' And he laughed." (Bechard 62).

The titular character of *The Diary of Pelly D* directly invokes this barrier when she reports being asked out by her classmate Gene R: "I told him I'd think about it. A girl with my social standing can't be seen to be throwing herself away on second-rate goods. Maybe it wd be easier if we cd all get stamped, then you'd know where you stood with people" (Adlington 106). While nothing pans out between Pelly D and Gene R, Pelly D's later interest in Marek T faces similar boundaries, as Marek T is both an orphan and

socially undesirable. When Pelly D finds out that her genetic/social standing is not as prestigious as she had imagined, however, she questions her understanding of these boundaries. Circumstances which throw her together with Marek T also lead her to re-evaluate her impressions of him, and she ends up returning his initially-unrequited crush. The growing inter-group tension leads to a foreboding end for Pelly D and others of her genetic status, and Pelly D and Marek T certainly do not get a happily-ever-after ending.

The idea of controlling marriage and parenthood for the greater good is absolutely central to the plot of *Matched*. Cassia has grown up in comfort thanks to the efforts of the nearly-omnipotent Society, and now that she has turned seventeen, she is eligible to be Matched to her future spouse. Young people have the option of being Matched or remaining Single; if they choose the former, bureaucratic sorters will locate their optimal partner (who, given the structure of the Matching process, will always be of the opposite gender). Cassia is happy to be Matched to her best friend, Xander, until a technical error reveals that another classmate, Ky, had been selected to be her Match until he was excluded from the process due to his lesser social status as an Aberration—a label he bears only because of an infraction committed by his father (Condie 46-47). The Matching process is designed "to provide the healthiest possible future citizens for our Society and to provide the best chances for interested citizens to experience successful Family Life" (44), and childbearing and parenting are completely limited to Matched couples. As Cassia struggles to decide between the socially-acceptable platonic love she feels for Xander and the passion she shares with Ky, she also confronts a Society official with her revolutionary proposal that "people should be able to choose *who* they Match with" (246). Though Cassia's romance with Ky would be unremarkable in our own time, with the possible exception of his father's criminal past, the theme of loving someone

considered socially off-limits has its contemporary applications and could be used to spark a broader discussion about the communitarian interests of a society in drawing lines across which intimate relationships should be not be permitted.

At the center of *The Last Book in the Universe*, Spaz also sits in the middle of several intersecting prejudices. He has epilepsy; because of this, he has been disowned by his parents and must seek protection from a street gang; and as a consequence of his living situation, he lives in poverty and sometimes participates in criminal activity. Still, Spaz has found something of a niche for himself in the world until he meets Lanaya, a proov (geneticially improved human) who happens to be a slummer, "a proov who likes to mix with the rest of us. Gives 'em a thrill they can't find in Eden" (29). Though some degree of rebellion seems to be acceptable for proovs, the consequences for a "normal" who becomes involved with a proov can be disastrous. Spaz develops a crush on Lanaya, and she seems to be interested in him as well, When Spaz is reunited with his ailing younger sister, she promptly suggests that Spaz marry Lanaya, but Spaz is quick to correct her. "Silly girl [. . .] Proovs can't marry normals. And I'm not even a normal" (143). Even as social barriers bend and Lanaya's parents adopt a feral boy from Spaz's society, the negative stigma of epilepsy and the social privilege of being a proov create a chasm that will be difficult to ever bridge.

Not Quite Human: Who Is Allowed To Love?

Rather than concerning themselves with the appropriate object of affection, other speculative societies (and hence other works of speculative fiction) focus on determining who should be permitted to *give* affection and participate in romance, marriage, and parenthood as an individual. That is, while the societies discussed in the previous section

sought to prevent certain types of unions (e.g. in *Matched*, anyone can marry and have children as long as the Society gets to choose their partner), the societies in this section are more concerned with prohibiting certain classes of people from seeking *any* sort of union. These concerns are not always separate and distinct; to return to the example of *Matched*, Ky's status as an Aberration serves to prevent him from being Matched to anyone, ever.

Frequently, these limitations are based in societal prejudices. Matt, the main character of *The House of the Scorpion*, is told in no uncertain terms that he is legally prevented from even being seen as human: "all clones are classified as livestock because they're grown inside cows. Cows can't give birth to humans" (Farmer 226). The mere suggestion that he might have a girlfriend is seen as "disgusting" (104) by other members of the Alacrán family. Matt confesses his love for María to her father (133) and continues to think of her after she is sent away to a convent, but María is destined to marry Tom, a member of Matt's progenitor's family, in a politically-advantageous arranged marriage. Matt, on the other hand, is intended to become a source of body parts for his progenitor until he runs away and meets people—including María's long-gone mother—-who reject the anti-clone prejudice around which he has grown up.

For Jenna (of *The Adoration of Jenna Fox*), concern about her ability to love and be loved is more internal. After a devastating car accident, Jenna's body was heavily reconstructed, far surpassing her country's legal limit on artificial human parts. As Jenna falls in love with Ethan—who has a troubled past of his own—she is constantly preoccupied with her secret status as something not normal. "Would he still want to kiss me if he knew about me? *Everything in the universe says it's not right*" (M. Pearson 144). Jenna's grandmother contributes to a lot of these fears, not being reticent about her belief

that the *real* Jenna was lost in the crash. When Jenna finally reveals her medical history to Ethan, he accepts her immediately, and the epilogue further explains that the two were married and ultimately spent seventy years together. Jenna's story and activism also changed the legal limits on artificial body parts, making it possible for others like her to enjoy a less secretive, worry-fraught existence.

Out of This World: Love and Alien Species

The presence of alien species, another frequent science fiction trope, further complicates societal interests in regulating relationships, particularly when the alien species is humanoid enough to make conversation, friendship, and romance seem entirely plausible.

Such a relationship is at the center of *Fever Crumb*'s backstory. In Reeve's futuristic London, a human-like mutation known as the Scriven have established themselves as an aristocracy of sorts. The Scriven believe themselves to be a new species, *Homo superior*, "the idea being that they had come into the world to replace dull old *Homo sapiens*" (Reeve 11). Unfortunately for the Scriven, they have trouble reproducing at a necessary replacement rate, and, in particular, Scriven and humans are unable to produce children together. Over the course of the story, the reader learns that Scriven and humans are not so different as either would like to think. The title character is revealed to be the daughter of a human man (whom she has known as her adoptive father) and a Scriven woman, Wavey Godshawk. When Fever learns this, she begins to interrogate her own beliefs about the Scriven, wondering if perhaps "there was never as much difference between us and them as they liked to claim," or even if her mother had been some kind of

in-between missing link (183-184).

Interspecies relationships get more complicated, and harder to directly equate to human sexuality, in *Singing the Dogstar Blues*. The two-gendered nature of Mavkel and the other Chorians has already been explored, but of particular relevance here is the manner in which Mavkel selects his gender pronoun. Mavkel dislikes being referred to as "it," as if he were an object. Joss informs him that he must choose a sex to get a different pronoun, and Mavkel seeks to confirm his understanding that humans bond with the opposite sex. Joss explains the basics of heterosexuality, homosexuality, and bisexuality, then situates herself as "an opposite kind of gal" (Goodman 94). Armed with this information, Mavkel chooses to be male and to be referred to as "he." However, the exact nature of the bond Mavkel seeks to form with Joss is more akin to a very close, lifelong sibling/partner relationship than to a sexual or reproductive union.

We're Here, We're Queer, Get Over It

So why do we need queer characters in young adult science fiction? Queer young people are as complex and diverse in their interests as non-queer young people, and undoubtedly many queer young readers will be perfectly happy with books that focus their attention on bioethics (*Jenna Fox*), plastic surgery and the beauty standard (*Uglies*), or the total domination of our lives by capitalism and advertising (*Feed*). All of the books in this sample are "Best Books" for a reason, and I am not trying to suggest that they are not good at what they do.

But 81.25% of them do it without a single mention of gay, lesbian, bisexual, intersex, transsexual, transgendered, genderqueer, questioning, asexual, or queer people in the future. (Moreover, *none* of the books have characters who are intersex, transsexual,

transgendered, questioning, or asexual.) The only "coming out" transpires when Cyrus (who is heterosexual) reveals to Lev that he has two dads. None of the queer characters are shown to exist among any sort of queer community; even the acknowledged community that assembled the AIDS quilt is long gone by the time of *Singing the Dogstar Blues*.

I do not plead for queer visibility in young adult science fiction because I am worried about queer youth falling to pieces without it. Queer young people have made do with insufficient "road maps," to borrow Biegel's terminology, for a long time, and they will continue to find ways to push through and create spaces for themselves. Contemporary young adult fiction with queer themes is proliferating, as demonstrated by the rapid growth of titles in Cart and Jenkins's bibliography. But young adult science fiction is, judging by this sample, a place where queer identities and queer issues overwhelmingly do not exist. Sure, a dystopian future could bring about a total erasure of queer identity because of a heightened focus on reproduction and the loss of narratives of romantic love—but to get there from here, there should be some sort of backstory explanation of this phenomenon, which was simply not present in the queer-free books in this sample.

In futuristic societies with some degree of genetic modification, the lack of queer people is as disturbing as the overwhelming proliferation of blue-eyed white people. The underlying, often subconscious, message here is chilling: we may (or may not) accept you for who you are now (queer, black, Deaf), but when we gain control over what people are like, *we will not make anyone like you*.

Similarly, as we look at both queer visibility and family structures, a lack of evolution or change can suggest that gender roles, families, and sexual/gender identities

are set in stone rather than culturally defined. Families have certainly not always included a mom, a dad, and two to three children; in other times and other cultures, extended families might all live together, or eight to ten children might be the norm, or children might not be gendered until adolescence, or children might be raised communally. Why should things be exactly the same in the distant future unless what we have now is the one and only best way? (If the author seems to be asking these questions and answering them convincingly, that's active discourse and exploration, which is what speculative fiction was designed to do.)

Recently, there has been a push for the inclusion of LGBT history in the public school curriculum, including queer activism and simple acknowledgement of the queerness of significant historical figures. (Biegel covers this at some length.) The underlying idea is simple: queer people are not new. Even if some of the terminology and activism has a recent vintage, there have been people throughout history who have had non-normative sexual orientations and gender identities, and different societies have dealt with these identities in different ways. The presence of queer characters—as central, dynamic characters or even in the background—send a similar message. Attebery sums up this hope when he discusses gay and lesbian writers of *Star Trek* "slash" fan fiction (which portrays canonically-straight characters as gay lovers). These fans, Attebery argues, write queer relationships into the future "to validate their existence as a continuing component of humanity. **They want to be told that gays won't go away, won't be legislated or engineered out of existence between now and the 24th century**" (176, emphasis mine).

Conclusion and Action Plan

What are we, as librarians, to do about this? How can we create more diverse science fiction collections when young adult science fiction remains so "white, middle-class, and polite," to hearken back to Kelley Eskridge's class with Samuel R. Delany (Griffith and Eskridge 42)? We can, of course, encourage our author friends to take queer issues into consideration when building fictional worlds, or even become speculative fiction authors ourselves. In the meantime, though, here are some suggestions for evaluating materials and diversifying a collection:

Consider collecting/recommending works written for an adult audience. Science fiction as a genre sees a fair amount of age group crossover. Orson Scott Card's *Ender's Game*, for example, has been published in editions that emphasize either its young protagonist or its science fiction worldbuilding, and I have found it in the children's, young adult, adult fiction, and science fiction sections of bookstores and libraries. As my literature review suggests, queer themes are more common in science fiction marketed to adults; be aware of what's being published there and considering putting a copy of some young-adult-appropriate titles in your own collection.

Pay attention to the awards. This study looked at books from the BBYA lists put out by YALSA, and the results didn't offer much by way of queer characters or themes. Consider tracking awards such as the James Tiptree, Jr. Award, which focuses on depictions of gender issues in science fiction and fantasy, or the Lambda Literary Awards (for LGBT-related works), which have a category for LGBT Science Fiction/Fantasy/Horror and a category for LGBT Children's/Young Adult.

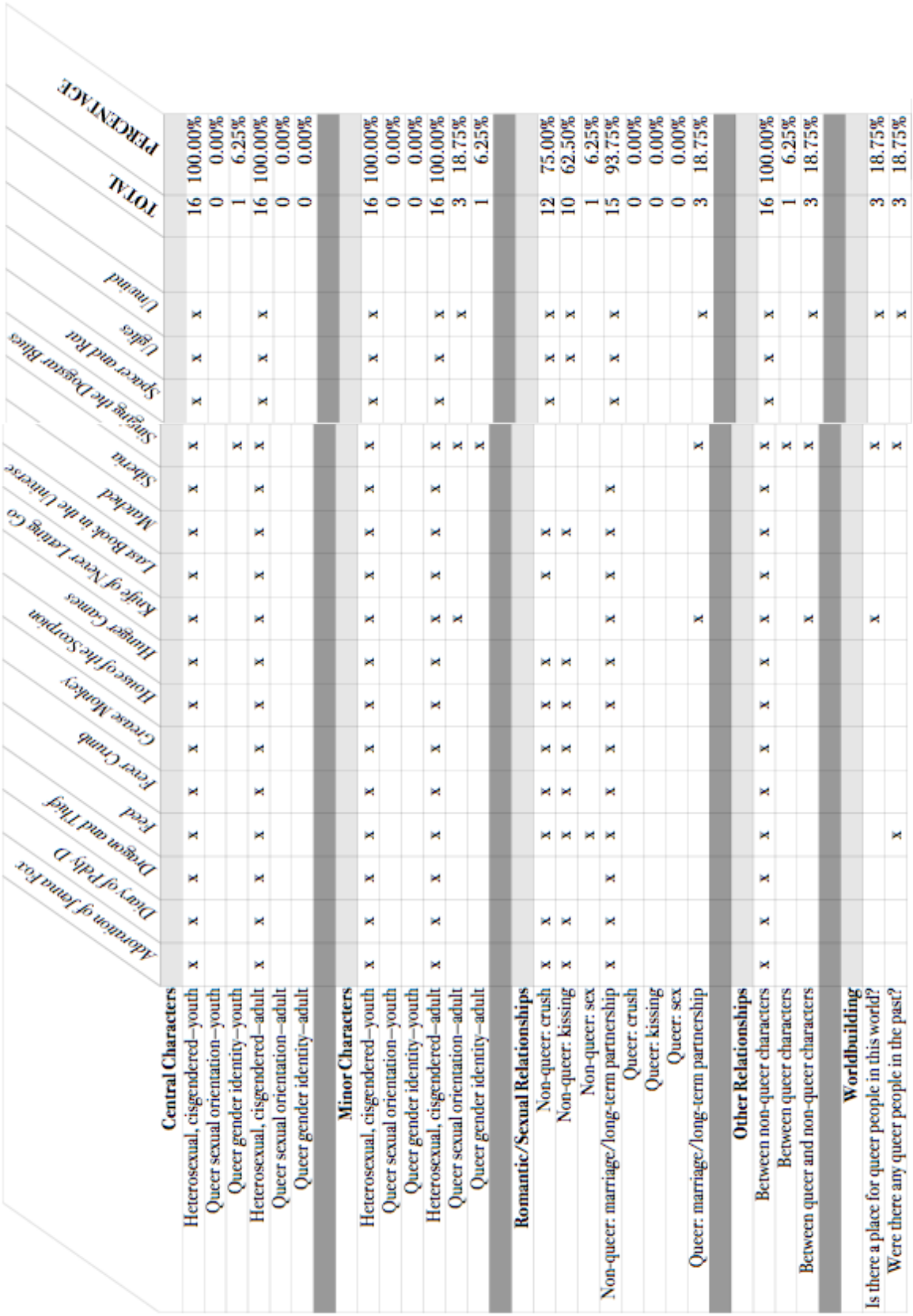
Include queer themes in your selection rubric. Obviously, your collection will never grow if you exclude all YA science fiction novels that exclude queer themes, but do

consider including them as one aspect of the selection process. Hold genre fiction to the same standards as contemporary/realistic fiction. I've included a set of questions to ask about the depiction of queerness in young adult science fiction in Appendix C.

Ask questions. When talking about science fiction books with young adults, think about including a discussion of queer characters or the lack thereof. One set of questions that can be applied to any book: "Is there a space for queer people (in either sexuality or gender identity) in this world? If so, do we see any queer characters in that space? If not, does the exclusion of queer people seem deliberate, and does it contribute to our understanding of this new, presumably imperfect, society? In either case, do you think the author was intentional about this?"

Remember that talking about identity issues benefits everyone. Young adulthood sees a lot of developmental work focused on defining one's own identity. Everyone has a sexual orientation (though some asexuals define themselves as falling outside the bounds of identity) and a gender identity, even if those identities happen to coincide with the norm. Talking about how we know who we are, how we figure out who to love, and how we find places to belong can assist that development and help everyone be proud of their identity. Just as books with characters of color are not only for readers of color, books that interrogate gender and sexuality are not only for queer-identified kids.

Appendix A: Charts With Findings



	Adoration of Jenna Fox	*Diary of Pelly D*	*Dragon and Thief*	*Feed*	*Fever Crumb*	*Grease Monkey*	*House of the Scorpion*	*Hunger Games*	*Knife of Never Letting Go*	*Last Book in the Universe*	*Matched*	*Siberia*	*Singing the Dogstar Blues*	*Spacer and Rat*	*Uglies*	*Unwind*		**TOTAL**	**PERCENTAGE**
Methods of Reproduction																			
"Traditional"/ unspecified	x		x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		14	87.50%
Babies come from laboratories OR IVF	x	x		x						x			x					5	31.25%
Cloning				x			x											2	12.50%
Individual genetic modification is possible					x					x			x	x				4	25.00%
Adoption or guardianship		x	x						x	x	x					x		6	37.50%
Foundlings					x					x						x		3	18.75%

Appendix B: A Note on Terminology

In this paper, I have opted to primarily use the term "queer" to refer to people who identify outside of the heterosexual, cis-gendered norm in any way. However, there are situations in which more specific terminology is necessary, and some of the authors I quote use different language. For the sake of clarity, I am providing the following explanations, which should be sufficient to understand this paper. The reader is reminded, however, that individuals may choose to identify themselves with these terms in ways which differ from the explanations provided here. All terms are listed here in their adjective forms.

- **Asexual**: "a person who does not experience sexual attraction" (AVEN n.p.)
- **Bisexual**: a person who is romantically/sexually attracted to both male- and female-identified people
- **Cisgender(ed)**: a person who identifies as the gender assigned to them at birth
- **Cissexual**: a person who identifies as the sex assigned to them at birth. "**Cis**" is a shorthand term used to refer to people who are both cisgendered and cissexual.
- **Family of Choice**: as the name suggests, a family of choice is the group of people with whom one *chooses* to surround oneself as a support group and close community. Members of a family of choice may or may not be related in legal or biological ways, and they may or may not be queer.
- **Family of Origin**: in contrast to a family of choice, a family of origin is the group of legal and biological relatives to whom one was assigned at birth, adoption, or through other "traditional" means of family creation. These terms are often used by people who have become distant or estranged from their family of origin, particularly because of their queer identity.

• **Gay**: a male-identified person who is romantically/sexually attracted to other male-identified people. “Gay” is also sometimes used to refer to all homosexual people, or to all people who experience homosexual attractions (which can include bisexual and pansexual people).

• **Genderqueer**: a person whose gender identity cannot be labeled as “masculine” or “feminine”

• **Heterosexual**: a male-identified person who is romantically/sexually attracted to female-identified people, or a female-identified person who is romantically/sexually attracted to male-identified people. Colloquially called “**straight**.”

• **Homosexual**: a person who is romantically/sexually attracted to people of the same sex and/or gender.

• **Intersex**: a person born with non-binary sex organs

• **Lesbian**: a female-identified person who is romantically/sexually attracted to other female-identified people

• **Pansexual**: a person who is romantically/sexually attracted to people of all sexes and gender identities

• **Polysexual**: a person who is or desires to be in concurrent romantic/sexual relationships with more than one person

• **Questioning**: a person who is actively investigating their sexual orientation or gender identity

• **Transgender(ed)**: a person who identifies as a gender different from that assigned to them at birth. Terms such as “transmasculine” or “transfeminine” can be used to more specifically identify an individual, where the gender given is that

with which the individual identifies.

• **Transsexual**: a person who identifies as a sex different from that assigned to them at birth. "**Trans**" or "**trans***" can be used as an inclusive catchall term for all people who are not cis.

The Acronyms

Acronyms such as "LGBT," "GLBT," and "LGBTQ" are often used as blanket terms to refer to queer populations. Letters are added and subtracted from these acronyms to create nuance or more properly define the population being discussed; "GLB" includes only people of homosexual and bisexual orientations, while longer acronyms such as "GLBTTQQIAA" attempt to include as many specific groups as possible. The most common letters are G(ay), L(esbian), B(isexual), and T(ransgender). GLBTTQQIAA includes Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Transsexual, Queer, Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, and Allied people, where "allies" refers to heterosexual, cis-gendered people who consider themselves to be in solidarity with queer people and the queer community.

Appendix C: Evaluating Queer Themes in Young Adult Science Fiction

Drawing on and expanding the Gay Task Force's guidelines in "What to Do Until Utopia Arrives," I offer these guidelines for evaluating queer themes in young adult science fiction novels.

Central Characters

—Are there queer-identified central characters? Are they adults, young adults, or both? Are they given plotlines outside of being gay or coming out?

—If a queer identity is central to the plot, is it dealt with in a respectful, non-stereotypical manner?

Minor Characters

—Do background characters include people from a wide variety of identities?

—Are all queer characters present to serve a queer-centric purpose, or do some characters just happen to be queer?

Romantic and Sexual Relationships

—Are queer relationships and non-queer relationships modeled with relatively equal degrees of detail and explicitness?

—Can the reader learn about the ways in which queer people find love?

—Are queer relationships treated with respect, or are they trivialized ("just a phase") or used to humiliate characters? (Male-male sex in particular has a tradition of being used to exert power and dominance.)

Other Relationships

—Do queer and non-queer characters have well-developed relationships with one another?

—Do queer characters have platonic relationships with one another?

Worldbuilding

—Is there any place for queer characters in this world?

—Are queer people/issues from the past acknowledged?

—If reproductive technology or other alternative family-building methods are common in this world, have their implications for queer families been considered?

—If there are no queer people, does the author seem to be aware of (and commenting on) their absence?

Impact on Readers

—Does this book present queer readers with productive, healthy options for their own lives as well as a positive vision of queer people in the future?

—Does this book present non-queer readers, or any readers with little exposure to queer people and culture, with a positive impression of queer identities?

Appendix D: Annotated Bibliography of Science Fiction Novels

Adlington, L.J. *The Diary of Pelly D*. New York: Greenwillow Books, 2005.
—Teenage construction worker Toni V finds a diary buried at his worksite and reads about the life of Pelly D. Pelly D has a relatively carefree adolescence, but there is a movement to physically mark people based on their genetic group to encourage rigid social stratification. Crossing these social lines, Pelly D nurses a crush on the higher-status Ant Li before beginning a romance with orphaned classmate Marek T. The sociopolitical turmoil in the background of Pelly D's diary also provides intriguing clues as to the origins of the war and destruction that define Toni V's life.

Anderson, M.T. *Feed*. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press, 2002.
—Titus enjoys a shopping- and pop-culture-filled adolescence hooked up to a ubiquitous "feed" until he meets Violet, who grew up in a poorer family and can remember life before her feed was installed. Violet's attempts to thwart the technology's omniscience eventually threaten her health and end her life.

Bechard, Margaret. *Spacer and Rat*. New Milford, CT: Roaring Brook Press, 2005.
—When space-station resident Jack meets Earthie Kit, he confronts his ideas about Earth-dwelling "rats" and gets swept up in a race to protect Waldo, a sentient robot created by Kit's now-dead father. Meanwhile, Jack dreams of leaving his home, where he is all alone, to live with distant cousins he has never met.

Collins, Suzanne. *The Hunger Games*. New York: Scholastic, 2008.
—Katniss is chosen to represent her rural, impoverished district in the annual Hunger Games, in which children from across the country battle to the death to remind the citizenry of the consequences of a rebellion seventy-four years earlier. Joined by an acquaintance, she travels to the wealthy Capital district, learns how the other half live, and is then engaged in the Hunger Games, which test her ethics, her humanity, and her brute physical strength.

Condie, Ally. *Matched*. New York: Dutton, 2010.
—When she turns seventeen, Cassia expects to be Matched with her future husband by the all-determining governors of her Society. When the time comes, she is Matched to her best friend, Xander . . . but also, accidentally, to another boy, Ky, who was never supposed to be eligible. As Cassia pursues her interest in Ky, she begins to question the authority that has ruled her life, and ultimately ends up striking out on her own.

Eldred, Tim. *Grease Monkey*. New York: Tor, 2006.
—In a collection of short stories, human mechanic Robin adjusts to life on a space station, where he works as the assistant to Mac, a gorilla. Mac and Robin provide the mechanical support for an all-female squadron of fighter pilots who consistently win their matches against every other squadron on the station. Recurring subplots include Robin and Mac's budding romances with a library assistant and an admiral, respectively, and Robin's attempts to sneak his favorite science fiction novels into the space station's

library collection. Significant backstory is also provided to explain the invasion of Earth by a benevolent extraterrestrial life-force that provided gorillas with an evolutionary speed-up, allowing them to become as intelligent as humans.

Farmer, Nancy. *The House of the Scorpion*. New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2002.
—Matt experiences a sheltered and controversial childhood as the most recent clone of an elderly opium baron, referred to as El Patrón. Treated as a pet or a disgusting animal by El Patrón's family, Matt slowly realizes that he is destined to become "spare parts" for the opium baron as the old man gets older. When he reaches adolescence, Matt escapes into Aztlán, essentially a futuristic Mexico, and discovers that Opium, the plantation where he grew up, has been intentionally fixed in time while the rest of the world has progressed. He falls in with a group of orphans who are taken advantage of by their supervisors, but eventually returns to Opium to take El Patrón's place and, he hopes, reunite broken families and reverse some of the damage done by his progenitor.

Goodman, Alison. *Singing the Dogstar Blues*. New York: Viking, 2002.
—The Centre for Neo-Historical Studies, an elite school for students of time travel, plays host to an alien student from the planet Choria. Joss, the human daughter of a renowned newscaster, is partnered with Mavkel, the visiting Chorian. Chorians exist in a state of total duality—they have two of every body part and are two-gendered, and they are born in mirror-image pairs. Mavkel's birth-pair, Kelmav, has died, and he longs to pair with Joss. She consents, but the pairing cannot be completed until Joss, whose "father" was an anonymous sperm donor, knows all of her bloodlines. Using their research and time-travel skills, they discover that Joss's father was a famous figure—and a duplicitous one.

Halam, Ann. *Siberia*. New York: Wendy Lamb Books, 2005.
—Her father has been killed and her mother is a political prisoner, so Sloe must escape alone across a frozen hinterland to protect the last genetic legacies of wild animals, which have been totally eradicated from her world. Each animal prototype lends her much-needed assistance along the way as Sloe fights to survive and avoid being sold into slavery. As she seeks to be reunited with her mother, Sloe learns more about her parents' rebellions and why the government was so threatened by biodiversity.

Ness, Patrick. *The Knife of Never Letting Go*. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick, 2008.
—Todd is the last boy left in Prentisstown, where all the women were killed over a decade ago. In a matter of weeks, he will become a man—but his fathers tell him he must escape before that day comes. With the companionship of a talking dog and an orphaned girl, Todd makes his way to another civilization and learns the terrible truth about the hatred and murder that underpin his society.

Pearson, Mary E. *The Adoration of Jenna Fox*. New York: Henry Holt, 2008.
—As she adjusts to life in a new town, Jenna also has to come to terms with the knowledge that she is living in a manufactured replacement body after a car accident badly injured her and killed her best friends. At a small alternative school, she makes new acquaintances, including an attractive boy with a dark past, but she must keep the truth of her body a secret as it places her outside the law.

Philbrick, Rodman. *The Last Book in the Universe*. New York: Scholastic Signature, 2000.
—In a bleak, gang-controlled future world, Spaz becomes acquainted with Ryter, an old man who remembers how to read and write. When Spaz's beloved sister becomes extremely sick, Spaz fights to return to the family that abandoned him because of his epilepsy. A beautiful girl who belongs to the privileged, aristocratic class is able to offer some food, safe passage, and, ultimately, medical assistance.

Reeve, Philip. *Fever Crumb*. New York: Scholastic, 2009.
—Fever Crumb, a foundling, is the only girl in the Order of the Engineers. A special assignment leads her to question the Engineers' prizing of rational thought over emotion, as well as what she has been told about the circumstances of her birth. She discovers that she is the child of a human man and a woman of a new, supposedly separate species, leading her to investigate both their past and her future.

Shusterman, Neal. *Unwind*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2007.
—Three teenagers try to avoid being "unwound," or taken apart for organs, bones, and tissue, in a society where this is seen as a viable and moral alternative to abortion. Along the way, they discover a whole camp full of kids like them, hiding out until they reach the age of majority. Connor, a juvenile delinquent, and Risa, a ward of the state, fight for their lives, but Lev, a religious boy who has been "tithed," joins a terrorist subgroup to fight for his death.

Westerfeld, Scott. *Uglies*. New York: Simon Pulse, 2005.
—In the days leading up to the extensive plastic surgery that will turn her "pretty" and control her mental ability, Tally makes a new friend who is critical of their society's assimilation process. They run away to join a band of outsiders who live off the grid, but only after Tally has agreed to serve as a spy for the authorities that run her world. When her duplicity is discovered and questioned, Tally agrees to undergo the surgeries for scientific investigation.

Zahn, Timothy. *Dragon and Thief: A Dragonback Adventure*. New York: Tor, 2003.
—Draycos is a member of a dragon-esque species that requires a humanoid host to live. Draycos has lost his companion in battle, so he must pin his hopes for survival on fourteen-year-old Jack, a former con man who is initially unsure about entering into a symbiotic relationship. Jack's life and Draycos's species are both at risk as they race against assassins and corporate overlords.

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